



Sustainable Development Business News from MEBC

First established in 1992, MEBC is a business network run as a not-for-profit, limited liability company by Midlands regional business people to promote sustainable development as a sensible business proposition.

www.mebconline.com

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Bigger, better, dinner for 08 at 07 prices! – December 3rd

Wednesday, December 3rd 2008 - Birmingham City Council Banqueting Suite – date and location for the MEBC Business Success Dinner 2008. Now in its sixth year, the Annual Business Success Dinner will be even more entertaining and rewarding than ever before thanks to sponsorship from the Black Country Consortium. An additional feature will be the Round Room of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery where a champagne reception will be held sponsored by Faber Maunsell.

Celebrate with us the successful implementation of sustainable development values by regional businesses.



Guest Speaker - Dr Stewart Davies, previously having had Managing Director roles in Corus and Rugby Cement. Stewart today is Managing Director, Serco Integrated Services and Business Commissioner of the Sustainable Development Commission. His pre-dinner presentation “Realigning Business Values To Drive Sustainable Development” will particularly consider the transport, construction, industrial biotechnology sectors and utilities.

Awards - MEBC celebrates the outstanding contribution of its members.
Surprise Interviews – BBC News Personality Kay Alexander interviews unsuspecting guests.

Carbon Workshop comes to the Midlands – November 6th

In its new capacity as an official branch of the Business Council for Sustainable Development – United Kingdom, MEBC is organising the Midlands leg of a four-stop tour for the Carbon Economy Workshop of the BCSD-UK. BCSD-UK member, the Black Country Consortium is acting as host. Venue to be announced. Date – morning of November 6th.

By November, similar workshops will have been staged in London and Glasgow. After the Midlands version, the final event will be in Yorkshire.

Being led by BCSD-UK member Faber Maunsell/AECOM, the project seeks to identify what UK businesses are thinking in terms of the carbon economy, identifying opportunities, and linking the outcome of this research to the Vision 2050 project of the World Business Council.

Invitations are yet to be issued for this free-of-charge event. To reserve a place, e-mail katieh@ebc-info.co.uk

Heated Discussion at Martineau Dinner

Hosted by new MEBC Director, Paul Mountain of Martineau at their Birmingham offices, this was not so much a heated discussion but a discussion about heat. Interrupting a fine dinner, the wide-ranging exploration of the subject engaged guests drawn from the world of banking, development and heating technology plus the MEBC CEO.

An introduction presentation was given by Andrew Whitehead of Martineau whose slides can be downloaded from the Document Library of www.mebconline.com.

One of the key themes of the ensuing discussion was the need for new types of commercial relationships within the development industry, particularly in relation to house-building and community facilities. Heat, as opposed to power, is something of a Cinderella commodity - precious, but overlooked and wasted. Efficient delivery of heat from renewable sources is one of the great challenges facing the urban design and development industry, and there is a growing community of businesses - engineers, specialist contractors and sub-contractors, developers, RSLs, design consultants and funders - who are taking a keen interest in the subject of renewable heat and looking for new ways of making a contribution to the effort to stabilise climate change while making a decent profit or surplus.

Policy issues (regional and national)

As is so often the case, the UK is the home to much innovation and smart design based on sound research, but is behind the game when it comes to setting the policy agenda. So in Denmark, for example, it is now a legal requirement that all new social housing developments are served by district heating schemes sources from CHP generation. Through legislative intervention the German government has stimulated the emergence of one of the most powerful renewable energy and renewable heat markets in the world. By contrast the UK government has done much to compel higher standards of environmental sustainability in the delivery of new buildings; but has done little to create the conditions in which the infrastructure, skills-sets and supply chains can emerge in order to deliver complex schemes served by renewable heat.

Design issues - new schemes

The time is right for house builders to come forward with a new product. Solutions should be designed in, not bolted on as an afterthought. The more holistic a scheme, the better chance it has of success. The private sector is highly knowledgeable on cost consequences of imposition of CSH Code Level 3 or 4 and knows how to enhance a standard model in order to achieve compliance. The challenge is to persuade prospect owners of enhanced value in sustainable heat-energy efficient buildings; and also to find successful, integrated design solutions for affordable/social housing, through the greater use of, for example, thermal modelling on schemes - although paradoxically, one of the biggest design issues can be the avoidance of excessive heat, through solar overheating

Uptake of new technologies will drive supply side towards more integrated, multi-faceted solutions. So they will become systems providers, not just providers of products, working under different trade and contract structures. Ideally we will see manufacturers of condenser-boilers or thermal solar panels, system builders, architects, M&E engineering contractors and other design consultancies aligning themselves through new forms of partnership or framework agreements to meet growing and predictable demand - from local authorities, private house-builders and RSLs - for integrated and

sustainable housing schemes.

On current legislative trends, by 2016 houses will be near-air-tight, implying the introduction of forced air movement. This runs contrary to the current fashion for natural air flow. The drive towards sealed, air tight buildings is a source of concern to traditionalists who like to open the windows on a pleasant spring day. There is a need to understand the contrasting cases for naturally ventilated buildings - lacking heavy-duty air-con systems - and increasingly heavily sealed buildings to avoid wastage.

Nevertheless, too many projects are not achieving what they set out to achieve. Cost frequently intervenes and sustainable development values are compromised. There is too much green-wash, with values written into schemes to get them through planning and achieve funding or land release, then quietly degraded as the scheme progresses.

Forms of CHP

As regards forms of fuel for district heating CHP, biomass crop production is now virtually discredited from a sustainability point of view and woodchip, and livestock waste schemes will be limited by locality. There is a highly innovative CHP from district-wide collections of food waste operating in South Shropshire through a commercial partnership between the local authority and a private company, Greenfinch. This is a model which deserves wider application and it was disappointing when nearby Worcester City Council rejected similar proposals as too expensive. CHP from pyrolysed (very low CO₂, slow-burn) waste is being experimented with in London through the Park Royal Partnership funded by the LDA. All these types of heat generation have their part to play, but the sponsors and public funding authorities must be more ambitious. There is a growing community of specialist equity houses who understand the economics of renewable heat and want to invest in it, but the public sector must do more to create the conditions in which it can happen - in policy terms by defining areas of need through collaboration between agencies - and in physical terms, by intervening to assemble viable sites, promoting more projects which answer identifiable needs - housing, health, leisure, education - and creating value and opportunity.

The condition of existing stock

There is a huge challenge in seeking solutions to 2016 goals for domestic build and retro-fitting existing stock. Of 400,000 publicly tenanted homes in Birmingham only 50,000 comprise new stock built to acceptable contemporary standards of sustainability. It is almost completely unrealistic to expect such a quantity of homes to be demolished and replaced by 2016. Birmingham City Council, like so many large metropolitans with big portfolios of homes, must urgently examine the viability of retro-fitting their stock and devise methods and programmes of works for achieving this against a clear time-line. This leads on to the issue of funding.

Funding issues and issues of demand

The crucial aspect of securing commercial funding for district heating schemes is how to tie in tenants into the process. ESCOs are formed to fund, own and operate the CHP plant and the infrastructure. The ESCO raises the finance but their ability to do so is dependent upon the creditworthiness of tenants. The tenants' contracts to pay for the heat constitutes the income stream so the Bank's ability to attach to that income stream is critical.

Council owned housing stock is not readily susceptible to leveraging of returns on capital investment in the same way as private housing. The solutions are either:

- (a) granting local authorities greater powers to borrow against their stock; or
- (b) effecting large scale transfers to RSLs who have the greater freedom to borrow; or
- (c) a combination of the two, where, for example, a local authority can bundle certain of its assets into safer and easier retro-fitting schemes funded through prudential borrowing; while maybe offering more challenging stock to RSL partners on terms that the RSLs undertake to:
 - explore more long term retro-fit solutions, or

- demolish and rebuild the stock to acceptable standards of sustainability.

Also local authorities should use their land assets as a lever to stimulate the market, to encourage flexible development partnership based on risk-sharing and a co-ordinated approach the creating demand, not merely responding to it. This is arguably one of the keys to riding out the current difficult conditions - the triple whammy of a continuing housing shortage, declining values and tightening credit. There is a serious social and environmental need, but lenders are not lending and house-builders are not building (or are tightening credit terms or seriously scaling back their developments). The time is right for the local authorities and the RSLs to devise imaginative, flexible schemes aimed at areas of identified social and economic need and deliver them with the help of private sector resources, skills and capital.

Those attending were:

Carl Arntzen	Bosch Thermotechnology Limited
Eva Banos	Birmingham City Council
Leo McMulklin	Birmingham City Council
Dave Summersgill	Birmingham City Council
Sandy Taylor	Birmingham City Council
Neil Walker	BM3 Architects Limited
David Middleton	MEBC
Catherine Burke	Martineau
Paul Mountain	Martineau
Andrew Whitehead	Martineau
Jennifer Price	Midland City Developments
Kelvin Chetham	The Co-Operative Bank
Mark Draper	The Co-Operative Bank
Will Evans	Wolverhampton Development Company

Shell Springboard Opens for New Applications

Shell Springboard is now open for a fourth round of applications, for small businesses who have a product or service that reduces greenhouse gases.

Tackling climate change is not just about cost and compliance; if you've got a great idea (and a sound business plan), it could be a huge opportunity.

The fund will make awards of between £20,000 and £40,000 in early 2009.

You may be able to benefit from this, or know someone who could. To be eligible:

- Your product or service must reduce greenhouse gases, be innovative and commercially viable.
- You must have been in business for at least three months, as a sole trader or a company employing fewer than 250 people.

Applications are made online and the deadline is 7th November 2008. Go to www.shellspringboard.org to find out more.

Free Breakfast from Groundwork – September 18th

Groundwork UK is staging in Birmingham a free breakfast seminar on September 18th – subject: “Auditing your EMS and Continuous Improvement.”

Principles of EMS auditing - Types of audit required under ISO 14001 - Methodologies of an EMS audit
-Practical tips for continuous improvement.

For more information see attached flyer or visit www.groundworkwmebs.org.uk

Energy Event at NMM – September 10th – 11th

It's that time of year again! The following is the detail of the Energy Event.

In the light of soaring energy costs, it's in the interest of the profitability of all companies, small and large, to take steps to reduce their business energy consumption. The Energy Event is a chance to obtain information and guidance, through the seminars and workshops accompanying the show, as well as from the stands in the exhibition areas. The whole event is entirely free and is located at the National Motorcycle Museum which is next to the junction of the M42 and A45 making it easy to get to. In addition, Birmingham International Railway Station is close by with taxis available for the short ride to the National Motorcycle Museum.

For more information see attached flyer.

Worth a Read

Peter Quinn of ScotAsh has some good news but also highlights just how daft we can be! This article can be seen in the Document Library of www.mebconline.com

New Publications from World Business Council

A new publication from members of the Energy and Climate Focus Area of the WBCSD is an overview of adaptation from a business perspective. It describes potential impacts of climate change, risks and opportunities for business, and why business should consider adaptation planning and measures. It can be downloaded via www.wbcsd.org/DocRoot/dJ70CGHc4ToiFGt7hhMX/Adaptation.pdf

Agricultural Ecosystems Facts and Trends has been published by the WBCSD in the hope it will uncover some key trade-offs that mean extremely challenging decisions for governments, farmers, consumers and industry. It can be downloaded via:

www.wbcsd.org/DocRoot/dJRR9DmtqfAVVLwGBveO/AgriculturalEcosystems.pdf

Sourcing Sustainable Solutions – November 16th

This event will provide you with a unique and cost effective way to meet with suppliers who can provide you with innovative sustainable products and services that will help you reduce your environmental impact through your supply chain.

You tell Action Sustainability what your specific areas of interest and needs are, and they will conduct extensive research prior to the event, identifying the suppliers that match your criteria and organise meetings for you with these suppliers in one day and under one roof.

By attending this event you will:

- Identify new sustainable suppliers who may be able to help you improve the sustainability of your supply chain.
- Save time and money by meeting up to 25 suppliers of sustainable products and services all in one day and under one roof – specific to your own needs and areas of interest.
- Network with other decision makers to exchange ideas on sustainable procurement.
- Benefit from a discount at the accredited Sustainable Procurement training taking place on 17th November, also in Birmingham. The usual cost to attend is £350, however if you participate in the Sourcing Sustainable Solutions event you will be charged a rate of just £100 per delegate.

To book a place please call Kavita on 020 7700 0008 or email Kavita@actionsustainability.com

Job Opportunities at Acclimatise

Acclimatise are currently looking for two Risk Advisors and two Research Interns. For more information see attached job adverts.

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